

Senate Bill No. 1174

CHAPTER 292

An act to amend Section 35401.5 of the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

[Approved by Governor September 11, 2012. Filed with
Secretary of State September 11, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1174, Walters. Vehicles: length limitations: motorsports.

Existing law generally prohibits a vehicle from exceeding a length of 40 feet, and a combination of vehicles from exceeding a total length of 65 feet, with various specific exceptions. Existing law authorizes the Department of Transportation or local authorities, with regard to highways under their respective jurisdiction, to issue a special permit authorizing the operation of a combination of vehicles consisting of a truck tractor semitrailer combination with a maximum length from kingpin to rearmost axle measurement of not more than 46 feet, if the trailers are used exclusively or primarily in connection with motorsports, as defined.

This bill would instead exempt, until January 1, 2016, a combination of vehicles consisting of a truck tractor semitrailer combination with a kingpin to rearmost axle measurement limit of not more than 46 feet, a trailer length of not more than 56 feet, and used exclusively or primarily in connection with motorsports, as defined, to operate on the National Network, transition routes, as well as on any other routes authorized for that purpose by the Department of Transportation in consultation with the Department of the California Highway Patrol.

The bill would require the Department of Transportation to conduct a field test of the truck tractor semitrailer combination authorized under the bill for motorsport trucks with a trailer length of 56 feet to evaluate their performance on various segments of the National Network and transition routes. The bill would also require the Department of Transportation, no later than January 1, 2014, to submit a report to the Legislature that includes the results of the field test and a recommendation, in consultation with the Department of the California Highway Patrol, as to whether the 56 foot trailer length should be reauthorized.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 35401.5 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

35401.5. (a) A combination of vehicles consisting of a truck tractor and semitrailer, or of a truck tractor, semitrailer, and trailer, is not subject to the limitations of Sections 35400 and 35401, when operating on the Dwight D.

Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways or when using those portions of federal-aid primary system highways that have been qualified by the United States Secretary of Transportation for that use, or when using routes appropriately identified by the Department of Transportation or local authorities as provided in subdivision (c) or (d), if all of the following conditions are met:

(1) The length of the semitrailer in exclusive combination with a truck tractor does not exceed 48 feet. A semitrailer not more than 53 feet in length shall satisfy this requirement when configured with two or more rear axles, the rearmost of which is located 40 feet or less from the kingpin or when configured with a single axle which is located 38 feet or less from the kingpin. For purposes of this paragraph, a motortruck used in combination with a semitrailer, when that combination of vehicles is engaged solely in the transportation of motor vehicles, camper units, or boats, is considered to be a truck tractor.

(2) Neither the length of the semitrailer nor the length of the trailer when simultaneously in combination with a truck tractor exceeds 28 feet 6 inches.

(b) Subdivisions (b), (d), and (e) of Section 35402 do not apply to combinations of vehicles operated subject to the exemptions provided by this section.

(c) Combinations of vehicles operated pursuant to subdivision (a) may also use highways not specified in subdivision (a) that provide reasonable access to terminals and facilities for purposes limited to fuel, food, lodging, and repair when that access is consistent with the safe operation of the combinations of vehicles and when the facility is within one road mile of identified points of ingress and egress to or from highways specified in subdivision (a) for use by those combinations of vehicles.

(d) The Department of Transportation or local authorities may establish a process whereby access to terminals or services may be applied for upon a route not previously established as an access route. The denial of a request for access to terminals and services shall be only on the basis of safety and an engineering analysis of the proposed access route. If a written request for access has been properly submitted and has not been acted upon within 90 days of receipt by the department or the appropriate local agency, the access shall be deemed automatically approved. Thereafter, the route shall be deemed open for access by all other vehicles of the same type regardless of ownership. In lieu of processing an access application, the Department of Transportation or local authorities with respect to highways under their respective jurisdictions may provide signing, mapping, or a listing of highways as necessary to indicate the use of specific routes as terminal access routes. For purposes of this subdivision, “terminal” means either of the following:

(1) A facility where freight originates, terminates, or is handled in the transportation process.

(2) A facility where a motor carrier maintains operating facilities.

(e) Nothing in subdivision (c) or (d) authorizes state or local agencies to require permits of terminal operators or to charge terminal operators fees for the purpose of attaining access for vehicles described in this section.

(f) Notwithstanding subdivision (d), the limitations of access specified in that subdivision do not apply to licensed carriers of household goods when directly enroute to or from a point of loading or unloading of household goods, if travel on highways other than those specified in subdivision (a) is necessary and incidental to the shipment of the household goods.

(g) (1) Notwithstanding Sections 35400 and 35401, a combination of vehicles consisting of a truck tractor semitrailer combination with a kingpin to rearmost axle measurement limit of not more than 46 feet, a trailer length of not more than 56 feet, and used exclusively or primarily in connection with motorsports, may operate on the routes identified in subdivision (a) as well as on any other routes authorized for that purpose by the Department of Transportation in consultation with the Department of the California Highway Patrol. As used in this subdivision, “motorsports” means an event, and all activities leading up to that event, including, but not limited to, administration, testing, practice, promotion, and merchandising, that is sanctioned under the auspices of the member organizations of the Automobile Competition Committee for the United States.

(2) (A) The Department of Transportation shall conduct a field test of the tractor truck semitrailer combination authorized under paragraph (1) for motorsport trucks with a trailer length of 56 feet to evaluate their performance on various segments of the National Network and transition routes. The Department of Transportation shall, no later than January 1, 2014, submit a report to the Legislature in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code that includes the results of the field test and a recommendation, in consultation with the Department of the California Highway Patrol, as to whether the 56 foot trailer length should be reauthorized.

(B) Notwithstanding Section 10231.5 of the Government Code, the requirement for submitting a report under this paragraph is inoperative on January 1, 2018.

(3) This subdivision shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2016, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2016, deletes or extends that date.

(h) The Legislature finds and declares both of the following:

(1) In authorizing the use of 53-foot semitrailers, it is the intent of the Legislature to conform with Section 31111(b)(1)(C) of Title 49 of the United States Code by permitting the continued use of semitrailers of the dimensions as those that were in actual and legal use on December 1, 1982, and does not intend this action to be a precedent for future increases in the parameters of any of those vehicles that would adversely affect the turning maneuverability of vehicle combinations.

(2) In authorizing the department to issue special transportation permits for motorsports, it is the intent of the Legislature to conform with Section 31111(b)(1)(F) of Title 49 of the United States Code. It is also the intent of

the Legislature that this action not be a precedent for future increases in the distance from the kingpin to the rearmost axle of semitrailers and trailers that would adversely affect the turning maneuverability of vehicle combinations.

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